



Alva Lundin

Also Known As:

Alva Lindbom, Alva Lindbohm

Lived:

May 11, 1889 - February 4, 1972

Worked as:

title designer, title writer

Worked In:

Sweden

by Sofia Bull

The practice of rendering inter-title cards more decorative and expressive by means of creative typography, ornate borders or other types of illustrative artwork was first picked up by the Swedish film industry around 1919, a few years after it had become established in Hollywood. Swedish audiences were already familiar with so-called “art titles” from imported American films, and the incorporation of this feature into domestic productions partly answered more general calls for Swedish cinema to reinvent itself according to international standards. Furthermore, as had previously been the case across the Atlantic, the emergence of this practice followed debates about the artistic value and usefulness of title cards. Claire Dupré la Tour has argued that art titles along with the success of the “Loos-style” title writing—a reference to the inventive writer [Anita Loos](#)—granted the inter-title a more “privileged status vis-à-vis the image” and helped popularize the idea that inter-titles could make a significant contribution to a film’s success. This is as true for the Swedish context as for the American (329).

Throughout the 1920s, Alva Lundin was the most prolific credit title and inter-title designer in Swedish cinema and she designed title cards for at least nineteen silent films. It is difficult to determine the exact number, partly because only a small collection of documents from Lundin’s company are extant and partly because she only started marking the title cards with her signature “AL” after 1927. A number of the original art title cards preserved in the Swedish Film Institute are unsigned, and because Lundin’s style and motifs were fairly generic in many cases, it can be difficult to determine authorship with complete certainty. Furthermore, Lundin’s titles are, in a number of cases, missing from the extant film copies; they might have been removed during restoration attempts, but it is also possible that they never made it into the finished films in the first place. As far as we know, Lundin created her first title cards in 1919, but her career within the

film industry took off more fully after she achieved critical acclaim for her witty art titles in Mauritz Stiller's comedy *Erotikon* (1920). Following the transition to sound, she went on to create credit sequences for around four hundred feature films, as well as illustrations, graphics and typography for a still unknown, but undoubtedly large, number of educational and promotional films. She continued working as a title designer until the end of the 1950s.

Some information about Lundin's early years can be pieced together from the Swedish population registry and public tax records, as well as private records and accounts provided by her living relatives. Lundin's father died while she was still a child, at which point her mother moved the family to Stockholm to work as the manager of a retirement home for widows. In 1904, at the age of fifteen, Lundin enrolled as a student in the female section of the art school Tekniska skolan, which later became the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, where she stayed for two academic years and graduated with middling grades. As historian Ingrid Ingelman has outlined, the Swedish art schools had accepted female students since the middle of the 19th century and it had become increasingly acceptable for women to work as artists or illustrators, but it was still fairly unusual (32-33). Tekniska skolan specialized in teaching the applied arts and, according to Lundin's diploma, she studied, among other things, freehand drawing, shading techniques, figure and landscape drawing, painting, typography, and calligraphy. No actual records have been found supporting the kind of work Lundin did following her graduation, but according to her relatives she worked at the publishing company AB Hasse W. Tullberg in the mid-teens where she probably was hired for her skills as a calligrapher and illustrator. Allegedly, Lundin met her future husband, Sven Lundin, while working at Tullberg's. They were married in 1915 and subsequently left their jobs to start their own company: Lundins Ritbyrå/Lundin's Drawing Company. An article about Lundin's company, published in the film magazine *Filmnyheter* in 1924, refers to both Alva and Sven as "young artists" (8), but her relatives are adamant that they had a strict division of labor: she was the artist and he was the manager and administrator.

The company's primary source of income was providing typographical designs for letterheads and diplomas. In 1919, Lundin was commissioned by the film company Svensk Filmindustri to design the typography and produce the handwritten title cards for Mauritz Stiller's *Herr Arnes Pengar/Sir Arne's Treasure*. This was probably her first assignment as an inter-title designer, but since no records concerning Lundin's transactions with the film industry have been found, it is still unclear exactly how and when this alternate line of business was established. Either way, Stiller and Svensk Filmindustri must have been pleased with Lundin's work, because the following year they asked her to provide far more elaborate art titles for *Erotikon*. Only a few Swedish films had previously sported illustrative artwork and these had predominantly been of the decorative kind that added fairly little in terms of narration. Lundin's illustrations received particular admiration because they delivered witty, playful and clever comments on the plot and the characters, which helped deepen the audience's understanding, while also providing comic relief.

Only a few years later, in 1924, Lundin was described in a *Filmnyheter* article as "the only [Swedish] film title specialist" (8). That same year Lundin had completed a third and even more ambitious collaboration with Stiller. This time she had been commissioned to create between

three to four hundred art titles for *Gösta Berlings saga* (1924), a task that, according to one journalist, had “required the efforts of an able man for several weeks,” “the man” in this case being Mrs. Alva Lundin (8). This is not the only article published about Lundin’s work during the 1920s that explicitly commented on the fact that she was a woman. While praising her work, the journalists often expressed some measure of surprise at her gender, particularly when observing that she had both artistry and wit. The same writer that acknowledged her status as a “film title specialist” went on to describe her as such:

Mrs. Lundin is an energetic and inventive lady, and the film directors that have had the opportunity of collaborating with her are delighted with her work. This is not surprising when considering that she has a never failing ability to hit the nail on the head. In addition, she has a sense of humour—something that, according to prevalent prejudice, isn’t that common amongst the female sex (8).

While Lundin’s choice of profession and body of work were occasionally met with some surprise and prejudice, her career can still be seen as fairly characteristic of female art students of the time. Few women were able to become successful independent artists; most either worked as art teachers or illustrators if they continued working after their education at all. As Ingelman has shown, female artists were particularly frequent illustrators of fairytales and children’s books, probably because these were genres considered to belong to the “female sphere” (70-71). This line of work could perhaps be seen as a parallel to Lundin’s career within the film industry. Both children’s books and films have a history of being considered less prestigious when compared to the fine arts. Perhaps this actually made it somewhat easier for Lundin, as a female artist, to sustain such a long and successful career.

Bibliography

“Den som ‘textat’ Gösta Berling.” *Idun: Illustrerad tidning för kvinnan och hemmet* 10 (9 March 1924): 231.

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“En Kartongartist för svenska filmtexter: Lundins ritbyrå med Fru Alva Lundin i spetsen.” *Filmnyheter* 11 (1924): 8.

“Erotikon å Röda kvarn—de Wahl debuterar och gör lycka.” *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (9 November 1920): 9.

“Erotikon—Ett nytt mästerverk av Mauritz Stiller.” *Filmnyheter* 7 (1920): 16.

“Erotikons texter. Konstnärliga supplement till filmen.” *Filmnyheter* 6 (8 November 1920): 13.

“Filmtexternas utsmyckning: En detalj som börjar ägnas allt mera omsorg.” *Filmnyheter* 8 (1924): 8.

Florin, Bo. *Den nationella stilen: Studier i den svenska filmens guldålder*. Stockholm: Aura Förlag, 1997.

“Fru Alva Lundin 50 år.” *SF nyheter* vol. 9, no. 20 (14-21 May 1939): 2.

“Gösta Berling-filmen.” *Arbetaren* (11 March 1924): 5.

“Gösta Berling-filmen.” *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (11 March 1924): 9.

“Gösta Berling-filmen är nu framförd i sin helhet.” *Dagens Nyheter* (18 March 1924): 7.

“Gösta Berlings saga på film.” *Svenska Dagbladet* (11 March 1924): 7.

Ingelman, Ingrid. *Kvinnliga konstnärer i Sverige*. Uppsala: Acta, 1982.

Magnegård, Omar. “Garbos texterska skrev privat som en kråka.” *Svenska Dagbladet* (21 February 2000): 18.

“Mälarpirater—vacker svensk framgång å Röda Kvarn.” *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (30 October 1923): 12.

Archival Paper Collections

Collection of title card originals. [Swedish Film Institute](#).

Collection of material from Lundins Ritbyrå. [Swedish Film Institute](#).

Filmography

A. Archival Filmography: Extant Film Titles:

1. Alva Lundin as Title Designer

Herr Arnes pengar. Dir.: Mauritz Stiller, sc.: Mauritz Stiller, Gustaf Molander, td.: Alva Lundin (Svenska Biografteatern Sweden 1919) cas.: Richard Lund, Hjalmar Selander, Mary Johnson, Concordia Selander, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Archivo Nacional de la Imagen y de la Palabra - SODRE \[UYS\]](#), [UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive \[USB\]](#), [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique \[BEB\]](#), [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#), [Danske Filminstitut \[DKK\]](#), [Münchener Stadtmuseum \[DEI\]](#), [Filmoteka Narodowa \[PLW\]](#), [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#), [Hungarian National Film Archive \[HUB\]](#), [Museum of Modern Art \[USM\]](#), [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#), [Deutsche Kinemathek \[DEK\]](#), [Cineteca Nazionale \[ITN\]](#), [Cinemateca Romana \[ROB\]](#), [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#), [Jugoslovenska Kinoteka](#)

[[YUB](#)], [National Film and Sound Archive of Australia](#) [[AUC](#)], [Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée](#) [[FRB](#)].

Erotikon. Dir.: Mauritz Stiller, sc.: Stiller and Co., td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1920) cas.: Anders de Wahl, Tora Teje, Karin Molander, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Bulgarska Nacionalna Filмотека](#) [[BGS](#)], [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique](#) [[BEB](#)], [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)], [Münchner Stadtmuseum](#) [[DEI](#)], [Museum of Modern Art](#) [[USM](#)], [BFI National Archive](#) [[GBB](#)], [Gosfilmofond of Russia](#) [[RUR](#)], [Cineteca Nazionale](#) [[ITN](#)], [Cinemateca Romana](#) [[ROB](#)], [UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive](#) [[USB](#)], [Danske Filminstitut](#) [[DKK](#)], [Jugoslovenska Kinoteka](#) [[YUB](#)], [National Film and Sound Archive of Australia](#) [[AUC](#)], [Deutsche Kinemathek](#) [[DEK](#)].

Mälarpirater. Dir.: Gustaf Molander, sc.: Grustaf Molander, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1923) cas.: Einar Hansson, Nils Aréhn, Inga Tidblad, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)].

Boman på utställningen. Dir.: Karin Swanström, sc.: Oscar Rydqvist, Oscar Hemberg, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1923) cas.: Karin Swanström, Georg Blomstedt, Karin Gardtman, Franz Punkenhofer, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)].

Gösta Berlings saga, Del I. Dir.: Mauritz Stiller, adp.: Ragnar Hylten-Cavallius, Mauritz Stiller, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1924) cas.: Lars Hanson, Greta Garbo, Ellen Cederstrom, Mona Martenson, Jenny Hasselqvist, Gerda Lundequist, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [UCLA Film and Television Archive](#) [[USL](#)], [Cinémathèque Française](#) [[FRC](#)], [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique](#) [[BEB](#)], [Cinemateca do Museu de Arte Moderna](#) [[BRR](#)], [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)], [Filмотека Narodowa](#) [[PLW](#)], [George Eastman Museum](#) [[USR](#)], [Gosfilmofond of Russia](#) [[RUR](#)], [Hungarian National Film Archive](#) [[HUB](#)], [Museum of Modern Art](#) [[USM](#)], [Library and Archives Canada](#) [[CAO](#)], [BFI National Archive](#) [[GBB](#)], [Cineteca Nazionale](#) [[ITN](#)], [Cinemateca Romana](#) [[ROB](#)], [Cineteca del Friuli](#) [[ITG](#)], [Harvard Film Archive](#) [[USI](#)], [UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive](#) [[USB](#)], [Jugoslovenska Kinoteka](#) [[YUB](#)], [National Film and Sound Archive of Australia](#) [[AUC](#)], [Cinémathèque Québécoise](#) [[CAQ](#)], [Deutsche Kinemathek](#) [[DEK](#)].

Gösta Berlings saga, Del II. Dir.: Mauritz Stiller, adp.: Ragnar Hylten-Cavallius, Mauritz Stiller, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1924) cas.: Lars Hanson, Greta Garbo, Ellen Cederstrom, Mona Martenson, Jenny Hasselqvist, Gerda Lundequist, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)].

Damen med kameliorna. Dir.: Olof Molander, sc.: Olof Molander, td.: Alva Lundin (Bewefilm Sweden 1925) cas.: Tora Teje, Uno Henning, Nils Aréhn, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)], [Gosfilmofond of Russia](#) [[RUR](#)].

Flickan i frack. Dir.: Karin Swanström, sc.: Hjalmar Bergman, Ivar Johansson, td.: Alva Lundin (Biografernas Filmdepôt Sweden 1926) cas.: Einar Axelsson, Magda Holm, Nils Aréhn, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet](#) [[SES](#)].

Spökbaronen. Dir.: Gustaf Edgren, sc.: Gustaf Edgren, Sölve Cederstrand, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1927) cas.: Fridolf Rhudin, Karin Swanström, Anita Brodin, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Drottningen av Pellagonien. Dir.: Sigrud Wallén, sc. Henning Ohlson, td.: Alva Lundin (Film AB Minerva Sweden 1927) cas.: Vera Schmitterlöw, Stina Berg, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

En perfekt gentleman. Dir.: Gösta Ekman, Vilhelm Bryde, sc. Hjalmar Bergman (Film AB Minerva Sweden 1927) cas.: Gösta Ekman, Lary Jana, Karin Swanström, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#), [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#), [Deutsches Filminstitut \[DEW\]](#), [Deutsche Kinemathek \[DEK\]](#).

Synd. Dir.: Gustaf Molander, sc.: Paul Merzbach, td.: Alva Lundin (Film AB Minerva Sweden/Great Britain/Germany 1928) cas.: Lars Hanson, Elissa Landi, Anita Hugo, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#), [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#).

Svarte Rudolf. Dir.: Gustaf Edgren, sc.: Sölve Cederstrand, Gustaf Edgren, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1928) cas.: Fridolf Rhudin, John Ekman, Inga Tidblad, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Parisiskor. Dir.: Gustaf Molander, sc.: Paul Merzbach, td.: Alva Lundin (Isepa Sweden 1928) cas.: Miles Mander, Margit Manstad, Ruth Weyher, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#), [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#), [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Hans kungl. Höghet shinglar. Dir.: Ragnar Hyltén-Cavallius, sc.: Paul Merzbach, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1928) cas.: Hans Junkermann, Enrique Rivero, Karin Swanström, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Janssons frestelse. Dir.: Signurd Wallén, sc.: Sigurd Wallén, Henning Ohlson, td.: Alva Lundin (Film AB Minerva Sweden 1928) cas.: Oscar Byström, Margita Alfvén, Edvin Adolphson, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Ådalens poesi. Dir.: Theodor Berthels, sc.: Henning Ohlson, td.: Alva Lundin (Industri- & Reklamfilm Sweden 1928) cas.: Jessie Wessel, Einar Axelsson, Mathias Taube, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Rågens Rike. Dir.: Ivar Jansson, sc.: Ivar Johansson, td.: Alva Lundin (Tellus Film Sweden 1929) cas.: Mathias Taube, Eric Laurent, Märtha Lindlöf, si, b&w, 35 mm. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Den starkaste. Dir.: Alf Sjöberg, Axel Lindblom, sc.: Axel Lindblom, td.: Alva Lundin (Svensk Filmindustri Sweden 1929) cas.: Bengt Djurberg, Anders Henrikson, Gösta Gustafson, si, b&w. Archive: [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique \[BEB\]](#), [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

Norrläningar. Dir.: Theodor Barthels, sc.: Herbert Gran, td.: Alva Lundin (Film AB Minerva Sweden 1930) cas.: Carl Barcklind, Elisabeth Frist, Georg Blomstedt, si, b&w. Archive: [Svenska Filminstitutet \[SES\]](#).

B. Filmography: Non-Extant Film Titles:

1. Alva Lundin as Title Designer

AB Giftn bort Baron Olson, 1928.

D. Streamed Media:

Clip from *Erotikon* (1920)

Citation

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<<https://wfpp-test.cul.columbia.edu/pioneer/alva-lundin/>>